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Preparations for the Conference:
progress report of the Secretary-General

PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT

Report of the Secretary-General

This document gives a summary of the activities related to the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) up to 31 January 1994 and is presented to the Preparatory Committee for its consideration and appropriate action.

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INTRODUCTION

1. On 1 March 1993, Ms. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), was appointed Officer-in-charge of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In this capacity, the Under-Secretary-General was asked by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to address the organizational session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference, held in New York from 3 to 5 March 1993, and to coordinate the Conference preparatory process.

2. Accordingly, the following progress report gives an overview by the Under-Secretary-General of the activities of the Habitat II secretariat up to the end of January 1994.

3. One of the first initiatives undertaken by the secretariat was the preparation of a work programme for the preparatory process outlining in detail the nature, scope and preliminary costing of all activities to be undertaken by the secretariat.

4. This progress report follows, as far as possible, the three sections of the draft work programme for the preparatory process: support to the preparatory activities at the country level; regional and global activities; and information and public relations.

I. ACTIVITIES FOR THE PREPARATORY PROCESS

Draft work programme for the preparatory process

5. The draft work programme for the preparatory process was presented at the first meeting of the Bureau and subsequently distributed to all Member States, United Nations organizations and agencies on 27 October 1993 with the request that they provide their comments and observations to the secretariat by 30 November 1993. As of 31 January 1994 the secretariat had received only a few responses from national governments and agencies.

A. *Support to the preparatory activities at the country level*

1. Host country preparations

6. A proposal was submitted to the Turkish Parliament to establish a National Preparatory Committee for Habitat II. An Organization and Coordination Committee will be established, as well as a Technical Committee and a National Committee for the Private Sector to ensure private-sector participation.

7. The Under-Secretary-General plans to visit Turkey during the first half of 1994 to discuss with the Government the broad lines of in-country and conference preparations and to present to the Government a progress report on the preparatory process.

2. Non-governmental organizations

8. The Under-Secretary-General invited the NGOs attending the General Assembly of the Habitat International Coalition (HIC) - the global umbrella organization of human settlements NGOs - held at Manila on 28 September 1993, to take an active part in the national preparatory process of Habitat II. She stressed that action at the country level prior to the Conference was crucial to its success and that the Conference would be a unique occasion for an exchange of successful experiences. The event was followed up by consultations in Nairobi with key HIC officials.

9. NGOs in a number of countries intend to mobilize community organizations, the private sector, city governments and other actors in the improvement and management of settlements to consolidate the process at the local level and to expand the process gradually to the national level. These countries are: Brazil, India, Kenya, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, Senegal, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Republic of Tanzania.

10. The Habitat International Coalition has considered organizing a parallel NGO forum at the Conference. It is reviewing the secretariat's suggestion that such a parallel meeting should not be necessary if NGOs play an active role in the national preparatory process and if all the negotiating documents of the Conference adequately reflect NGO viewpoints.

11. UNCHS (Habitat) was also represented at the international colloquium on "A Future World after Rio", held in Paris, 19-20 November 1993, organized by the Centre de Recherche et d'Information pour le Développement (CRID), an umbrella organization representing NGOs. The colloquium was aimed at assessing the results of the NGO Rio Declaration. The NGO's International Network, through CRID, decided to launch a preparatory process in support of Habitat II among its members.

12. As a result of the first issue of the *Habitat II Bulletin* - which contained detailed information on the rules and procedures for the participation of NGOs in the Conference - applications for NGO accreditation are now being received by the secretariat. To date, 75 NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council enjoy accreditation, while an additional eight NGOs have sought accreditation.

B. *Regional and global activities*

1. Organizational session of the Preparatory Committee

13. The Preparatory Committee held its organizational session at United Nations Headquarters from 3 to 5 March 1993. A copy of the report on the organizational session, as adopted at its 5th meeting, and entitled Report of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), was issued as part of the Official Records of the General Assembly at its forty-eight session as document A/48/37 and is included in the documentation of the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee.

2. Fourteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements

14. At its fourteenth session, held at Nairobi, Kenya, from 26 April to 5 May 1993, the Commission on Human Settlements, in response to a request of the Preparatory Committee, considered the preparations for the Conference and subsequently adopted resolution 14/20 entitled "Preparations for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)". The text of this resolution, together with its annex, is reproduced in document A/CONF.165/PC.1/7

3. United Nations organizations and agencies

15. On 18 November 1993, UNCHS (Habitat) submitted a draft of the work programme for the preparatory process for the Conference to all organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, soliciting their comments, participation and support.

16. An international expert group meeting on urban indicators, organized jointly by UNCHS (Habitat) and the World Bank was held at Nairobi from 10 to 15 January 1994 to develop guidelines for in-country preparations and reporting, using specific indicators on the first theme proposed for the Conference: Sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world. Representatives from all regional commissions and specialized agencies were invited. The report of this expert group meeting (A/CONF.165/PC.1/INF.3) has been included in the documentation before the Preparatory Committee.

4. Bureau

17. The Bureau of the Preparatory Committee held two meetings during 1993. The first meeting took place on 17 to 18 September 1993 at Vancouver, Canada, while the second one took place in New York on 18 November 1993.

18. At the Vancouver meeting, the Under-Secretary-General presented a progress report to the Bureau. The Bureau reviewed and consolidated previous decisions relating to Habitat II, including the finalization, with five additional items, of the provisional agenda for the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee adopted during the organizational session of the Preparatory Committee.

19. During the meeting on 18 November 1993, the Under-Secretary-General presented a progress report on the activities for the preparatory process since the first Bureau meeting. The Under-Secretary-General stressed the need for the Bureau members to sensitize the countries in their regions on the importance of national action and further informed the Bureau that the trust fund established to provide funds for participation by least-developed countries had received only one country contribution (from Italy) and that an appeal letter would go out in January 1994.

5. Habitat II secretariat

20. On 13 August 1993, the Under-Secretary-General appointed a senior staff member, Mr. Pietro Garau, to the position of Director of the Habitat II secretariat.

21. On 1 February 1994 the Under-Secretary-General announced that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, had appointed Mr. Jorge Wilheim from Brazil to the position of Deputy-Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

22. In January 1994, a Habitat II secretariat core team of seven UNCHS (Habitat) staff members was formed and later complemented with other UNCHS (Habitat) staff as well as externally-recruited staff to work full-time on the preparations for the Conference.

23. The Government of the Netherlands provided assistance to the Habitat II secretariat in the refinement of the draft work programme for the preparatory process of the Conference by providing the advisory services of an international team of experts. This advisory team is assisting the secretariat prior to the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee. It is further envisaged to convene a second advisory round after the first session of the Preparatory Committee, so as to assist in the inclusion of the decisions of the Committee.

24. The Governments of Denmark and Norway are also considering making special contributions to the Habitat II preparatory process.

6. Regional activities

(a) Africa

25. Regional activities in Africa took their initial impetus from the Organization for African Unity (OAU) resolution 1469 (LVIII) on the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) of 29 June 1993. The Director of the Industry and Human Settlements Division of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was subsequently invited to Nairobi and held consultations with senior officials at UNCHS (Habitat) on 17-19 November. A UNCHS (Habitat)-ECA task force was created to accelerate Habitat II-related activities in the African region and to start identifying a Habitat II strategy for the region. This was followed up by a meeting at ECA headquarters between the Under-Secretary-General and the Executive Secretary of the ECA. The Under-Secretary-General also attended and briefed the Conference of Environmental Ministers (Addis Ababa, 26-27 September 1993) on the preparations for Habitat II. Other follow-up activities included a meeting of African technical experts to formulate a strategy for effective participation by the African region in the Habitat II preparatory process, held at UNCHS (Habitat) Headquarters from 21 to 25 February 1994, to be followed by an inter-governmental meeting of Ministers responsible for human settlements in the region (mid-March 1994). These meetings are being organized in collaboration with ECA and OAU and with participation of the African Development Bank (ADB).

26. UNCHS (Habitat) has offered short-term staff support to ECA to enable that organization to become an operational partner in the preparatory activities at the regional level. The issue of an African regional preparatory strategy for the Habitat II preparatory process was also discussed at the 6th Consultative Meeting

of the Chief Executives of the ECA-OAU-ADB secretariats (Cairo, Egypt, 8-9 December 1993). The Chief Executives noted the on-going

preparatory process and directed their joint secretariat to coordinate its activities to ensure effective participation at the regional level.

(b) Asia

27. Habitat II was a central subject of discussion at the Ministerial Conference on Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific, held at the headquarters of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok from 27 October to 2 November 1993. Two documents emerged from this conference: (a) Regional Plan of Action on Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific; and (b) a Ministerial Declaration on Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific. At the Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials, it was agreed that the preparatory process for Habitat II would be integrated with the process for implementation of the Regional Action Plan. The Ministers concurred, and in their declaration "...called upon member and associate member countries to actively promote broad-based participation in the preparatory process for Habitat II as a means of advancing the principles and implementing the activities adopted in the Regional Action Plan for Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific."

(c) Europe

28. Habitat II was presented at the 54th session of the ECE Committee on Human Settlements. The Committee transmitted to the Commission a proposal for a high-level ECE meeting on Habitat II to take place before the 1995 session of the Preparatory Committee. Heads of delegation at the ECE Committee will meet in Geneva prior to that session for coordination purposes. ECE country monographs are to be harmonized in accordance with Habitat II themes and related indicators. The United States delegation at the meeting offered consultancy support to Eastern European countries for indicators/monograph preparations.

(d) Latin America

29. Senior staff from the UNCHS (Habitat) Technical Cooperation Division and the Urban Management Programme presented and discussed Habitat II at the Second Annual Meeting of Ministers for Housing and Urban Development, which took place in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, from 29 November to 1 December 1993.

30. The Meeting expressed its actives support to Habitat II through commitment to setting up broad-based consultations at the country level and a search for funding of a regional project, supported by ECLAC as its secretariat, in preparation of a common presentation to Habitat II.

31. Discussions were held in Nairobi with staff from the joint ECLAC/UNCHS unit on preparations for Habitat II in the region.

(e) Arab States

32. The Government of Jordan is organizing, in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the League of Arab States, the UNCHS (Habitat) Regional

Office for West Asia and UNCHS (Habitat) in its capacity as the Conference secretariat, a regional preparatory seminar on Habitat II issues for Arab States.

33. The seminar will be held from 21 to 23 March 1994 in Amman, Jordan. The seminar will discuss, among other items, the draft proposal for activities to be undertaken at the national and regional levels, as well as a proposal to hold an Arab ministerial meeting for Habitat II prior to the second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee.

C. *Information and public relations*

1. World Habitat Day, 4 October 1993

34. On World Habitat Day, 4 October 1993, the Under-Secretary-General officially launched the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) at United Nations Headquarters, New York, in the presence of the President of the General Assembly and of a distinguished audience. The Under-Secretary-General stated that Habitat II was expected to come up with answers to the quest for better living conditions for all, initiated 20 years ago in Vancouver at the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. That goal would not be achieved by simply improving techniques and approaches for the planning, building and maintenance of human settlements. The quest must be based on three basic principles: home - as opposed to housing; community - as opposed to "settlement" or "neighbourhood"; and civic responsibility - as opposed to over-reliance on government or selfish individual motivation.

35. In the course of a public ceremony at the Headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), representatives of the Central Government of Chile, Parliament, the National Association of Mayors, the Chilean Chamber of Builders, the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Chile, the National NGO Coordinating Committee, and the Metropolitan Federation of Neighbourhood Councils, signed the constituting act of the National Preparatory Committee of Chile for Habitat II.

2. Meetings

36. Habitat II has been a recurrent item in all presentations and high-level meetings in which the Under-Secretary-General has participated. Presentations were made to a group of Swedish Parliamentarians, which included the Chairman of the Housing Committee. The Conference and Draft Work Programme for the Preparatory Process were also presented to a Finnish delegation when it visited UNCHS (Habitat) on 22 November 1993.

37. The Director of the Habitat II secretariat participated in an international meeting of cities from Europe, North America and Latin America organized by the Municipality of Barcelona from 1 to 3 December 1993. At that meeting a presentation was made on Habitat II, emphasizing the involvement of cities and international associations of cities and local governments in the preparatory

process. An agreement of cooperation was signed between UNCHS (Habitat) and the city of Barcelona.

38. During the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development, held from 31 January to 10 February 1994 in New York, UNCHS (Habitat) staff publicized Habitat II issues and, in particular, the first substantive meeting of the Preparatory Committee of Habitat II, as part of the informal agenda, to the government and agency representatives present, in order to generate further interest and collaboration.

3. Other information activities

39. The first issue of the Conference newsletter, *Habitat II Bulletin*, was launched at the December meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNCHS (Habitat). Subsequently, it has been included in a "Habitat II Information Kit", which has been, and is still being, widely distributed. The second issue of the *Habitat II Bulletin* is expected to be ready for distribution by March 1994.

40. The secretariat is considering the production of a Habitat II calendar. The secretariat will draw upon photographs from the UNEP/Canon photo competition with human settlements themes as a means of publicizing the Conference.

41. The secretariat is also in contact with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Kenyan broadcasting companies and various press agencies for details on how they can help in publicizing Habitat II.

42. An information leaflet on Habitat II has been prepared and is ready for dissemination, while a glossy brochure is expected to be ready by mid-March 1994.

43. Two 1000-word articles have been prepared for the UNEP publication *Our Planet* on the preparations for Habitat II and on the environmental implications of inadequate municipal infrastructure and housing.

44. Preparations are under way for the production of a Habitat II poster in all official United Nations languages.